

THE RURAL FIREFIGHTER

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Nebraska Forest Service

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A Professional Choice

I didn't know Shannon Halvorson. I imagine few people in our part of the world did. But Shannon's story is one all firefighters should hear. Shannon was a volunteer firefighter/EMT from north central Oregon. She had made it through some difficult challenges in her life and was on her way to achieving her overall goal of becoming a registered flight nurse.

In mid 2003, Shannon attended the annual conference of the Oregon Volunteer Firefighters Association. After hours, she was first given wine and then, as her "entry fee," was told to drink a large amount of rum to enter a hospitality suite sponsored by the Associations' president. Evidently, no one bothered to ask 20-year-old Shannon how old she was.

Shannon was encouraged to keep drinking and was soon chugging liquor as others chanted "Go, go, go." Just 45 minutes after she arrived, witnesses say she was showing signs of alcohol poisoning. No one, including paramedics and EMT's in attendance at the party, called 911.

At some point, two members of her fire department decided to take her back to her room in another motel. They too had been drinking. While crossing the parking lot, the firefighter carrying Shannon stumbled and fell. Shannon's head was slammed into the pavement, causing a serious head injury. Shannon died 12 hours later.

I'd like to think this tragic story would never happen here in Nebraska. But why is it that the first thing firefighters look to find when we go to a conference or a fire school is the nearest bar? Why does it seem that the party has become more important than the event?

As volunteers, we send mixed messages when we choose to turn many events into after-hours parties. On the one hand, we want to show we're just as professional as our paid brothers and will

almost come to blows over any other opinion. But on the other hand, we drive the fire department command vehicle to the bar and back it in right next to the front door so everyone can see it. I have to ask - is that the work of a professional?

As a group, we must change our mindset. Training events need to become about the training, not the party afterwards. No longer will people turn a blind eye when firefighters, financed with tax dollars, come home with no certificate because they were too hung over to make it to class. As a tax payer, I couldn't blame them one bit.

Shannon left behind a three-year-old son who's now asking questions about how his mom died. Shannon's father has also been searching for answers for five years, but those answers haven't been found. Maybe Shannon wasn't completely free of blame, but this CANNOT happen again—in Nebraska or elsewhere. Chiefs and elected officers—the change has to start with you. Do away with the hospitality suites, or, if you feel you must have one, at least monitor the situation. Then take the booze out of the fire house—not only does it potentially violate Nebraska law, it's a thing of the past that has no business being there. And absolutely above all, alcohol has no place on the fireground. Period.

Firefighters—the final responsibility is yours. I'm not saying you can't go have a good time when you're away from home, but please understand what's at risk when you choose to drink to the point that you are no longer in control. Is a single night worth it? Imagine the grief your family will go through. On top of that, if you are "voluntarily intoxicated," you're likely to be denied Public Safety Officer Benefits. And that part of class you sleep through might just be the part you need inside that burning house or out in the woods.

It's your choice.

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The Nebraska Forest Service: Improving people's lives by protecting, enhancing and utilizing Nebraska's tree and forest Resources

Les Lukert Conference

The Nebraska Society of Fire Service Instructors will host the 19th annual Les Lukert Winter Conference February 20-22 2009 at the Midtown Holiday Inn in Grand Island. There will be nine 12-hour classes offered.

1. Honor Guard/Color Guard Boot Camp, Keith Patterson, Instructor.
2. ISO: How To Get A Better Grade, Dennis Jones, Instructor.
3. Initial Attack Incident Commander, Paul Johnson, Instructor.



4. Tactical Decision Games / Sand Table Exercise, Nebraska Forest Service.

5. Part 1 High Impact and High Energy Training, Part 2 Are You The Best Of The Best Or Just Like The Rest, Tim Sendelbach, Editor-in-Chief, FireRescue Magazine.
6. I'm The Training Officer - Now What?, John Senft, Instructor.
7. Fire Instructor I (certification course), State Fire Marshal Training Division.
8. Ice Rescue, Joe Vandenack and Kevin Shea, Instructors.
9. Triage/Mass Casualty Incidents, Dave Huey and Cindy Heightshoe Instructors. Please visit www.nsfsi.com to register



Tips From Tex

During the 126th Annual NSVFA Conference October 16-18, the Fire House of Delegates brought up the Mutual Aid Task Force (MATF). The MATF was voted on by the NSVFA membership during the annual conference in York two years ago. They wanted to know where it stood and why they haven't seen anything since then. I explained to them that I had received just 16 responses from across the state, in spite of many phone conversations and discussions during visits to mutual aid meetings. The interest seems to have died. With that being said, a recommendation was made to revisit this issue, since the membership of the NSVFA felt it was important enough to work toward getting it back, and develop it as much as we can. The NSVFA Area Representatives and the District Directors have been tasked to attend mutual aid meetings and revisit this

subject. As a refresher, I've enclosed my original letter that was mailed to fire chiefs and rural board presidents. Any questions or concerns, give me a call. Until next time, stay safe. - George Teixeira

With the devastating wildfires that struck Nebraska this year, a number of lessons were learned. Foremost was the greatly appreciated and overwhelming amount of help from fire departments across the state. But, due to this support, some issues/questions/ideas have been raised.

Let's address the issue of self-deploying. By self-deploying, 1) the I.C. does not know you're coming because he did not request you, especially if you are from outside his Mutual Aid area. 2) insurance coverage/liability can become an issue and 3) if the incident becomes a state or federal disaster, you will not be able to get reimbursed if you self-deploy. With that said, let's see if we



can develop a system from which we all can benefit should a disaster occur, be it a wildfire, tornado, flood, etc. During the 124th Annual NSVFA Conference, the membership unanimously approved a motion "to support a Mutual Aid calling tree through development of a sub-committee or task force which would work with the Nebraska Forest Service." My perspective on this motion is to have each Mutual Aid Association put together a task force that is identified and can be deployed as needed. Each Mutual Aid Association would put together a task force by identifying a specific piece(s) of equipment from each town within the Mutual Aid District (i.e. grass truck, pumper, etc.). By doing this, we won't "strip" the closest town of its equipment and manpower. When the MATF is needed, the IC would then contact your county dispatch center and inform them your MATF is needed. Your dispatch would tone out all departments and notify them that the MATF is needed (much like business as usual, only asking specifically for the MATF). My intent is to have a compiled list of each TF and all county 911 center non-emergency phone numbers as part of the "Emergency Assistance for Wildfire Control" (Yellow Book).

Turkey Fryer Safety

Share these tips from Underwriters Laboratories (UL) to make the holidays memorable for the right reasons.

The deep-fried turkey has quickly grown in popularity. While some people rave about it, UL safety experts are concerned that chefs are sacrificing safety for taste.

"We're worried by increasing reports of fires related to turkey fryer use," says John Drenenberg, UL consumer affairs manager. "As a result, UL has decided not to certify any turkey fryers."

Here's why a fryer can be dangerous:

- * Many units easily tip over.
- * Overfilling may cause oil to spill out when the turkey is placed into the pot. Oil may hit the burner/flames causing a fire.
- * Partially frozen turkeys placed into the fryer can cause a spillover effect.
- * With no thermostat controls, the units also have the potential to overheat.
- * The sides, lid and handles get very hot.

If you use a turkey fryer, here are some tips for safer use:

- * Use fryers outdoors away from buildings and other materials. Never use on wood decks or in garages.
 - * Place fryers on a flat surface.
 - * Never let children or pets near the fryer when in use or even after use. The oil can remain dangerously hot hours after use.
 - * Do not overfill.
 - * Use potholders or oven mitts when touching pot or lid handles. Wear safety goggles to protect your eyes from splatter.
 - * Make sure the turkey is completely thawed and be careful with marinades. Oil and water don't mix!
 - * The National Turkey Federation recommends refrigerator thawing. Allow 24 hours of thawing per five lbs of bird.
 - * Never use water to extinguish a grease fire. If the fire is manageable, use an all-purpose fire extinguisher. If the fire increases, immediately call 9-1-1.
- Video footage of fryers under test may be seen at www.ul.com/consumers/turkeys.



Nugget of the Day

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."
—John Quincy Adams

No Fire Protection?

In updating our fire district maps, we discovered there are a number of parcels of land in Nebraska that, according to our records, are not part of a fire district. We're pretty sure these areas actually are covered, so we're looking for your help to update our records. Take a moment to scan the following list of 10 counties. If your county is listed, and has a red area on the map and corresponding legal description that matches your fire district, would you please let us know which fire district(s) those areas are now part of? Our contact information is on the front cover. Thanks!

Dawson County

Sections: 25, 26, 27, 34, 35, 36 of T12N, R22W. Sections: 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 of T11N, R22W.

Frontier County

Section: All of T6N, R30W. Section: All of T5N, R30W. Sections: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, N1/2 of 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 29, 30, 31, 32, W1/2 of 33 of T6N, R29W. Sections: S1/2 of 3, W1/2 of 5, 6, 7, S1/2 of 8, S1/2 of 9, N1/2 of 10, W1/2 and SE1/4 of 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36 of T5N, R29W.

Furnas County

Sections: 25, 26, 34, 35, 36 of T3N, R25W.

Howard County

Sections: W1/2 of 25, 35, 36 of T16N, R9W. Sections: 1, 2 of T15N, R9W.

Jefferson County

Parcel One: (1 of 2) Sections: S1/2 of 22, N1/2 and SW1/4 of 27, S1/2 and NE1/4 of 28, N1/2 and SE1/4 of 33, W1/2 of 34 of T1N, R4E.

Parcel Two: (2 of 2) Sections: W1/4 of 24, 25, W1/2 and NE1/4 of 26, SE1/4 of 27 of T1N, R2E.

Lincoln County

Parcel One: (1 of 4) Sections: 1, 2, E1/2 of 3, 10, 11, 12 of T16N, R33W. Sections: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, of T16N, R32W. Sections: 6, 7 of T16N, R31W.

Parcel Two: (2 of 4) Sections: 16, 21, 28, 33 of T12N, R29W.

Parcel Three: (3 of 4) Sections: 25, 35, 36 of T11N, R29W. Sections: 28, 29, 31, 32, 33 of T11N, R28W.

Parcel Four: (4 of 4) Sections: 28, 29, 32, 33, 34, 35 of T11N, R26W. Sections: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 of T10N, R26W. Section: 13 of T10N, R27W.

Morrill County

Parcel One: (1 of 3) Sections: 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34 of T18N, R52W. Sections: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18 of T17N, R52W.

Parcel Two: (2 of 3) Sections: 29, 30, 31, 32 of T18N, R46W. Section: 5, 6, 7, 8, 17, 18 of T17N, R46W.

Parcel Three: (3 of 3) Section: 1, 2, 3 of T23N, R51W. Section: 4, 5, 6 of T23N, R50W.

Nuckolls County

Parcel One: (1 of 2) Section: 1, 2, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, W1/2 of 17, NE1/4 of 20, N1/2 and SE1/4 of 21, 22 of T2N, R8W. Section: 7, 18 of T2N, R7W.

Parcel Two: (2 of 2) Section: 31 of T4N, R5W. Section: 1, 2, 11, 12, 13, 14 of T3N, R6W. Section: 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, S1/2 of 10, W1/2 of 11, W1/2 of 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 of T3N, R5W.

Pawnee County

Section: 7, 17, 18, 19, 20, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33 of T2N, R9E.

Phelps County

Section: All of T5N, R20W.

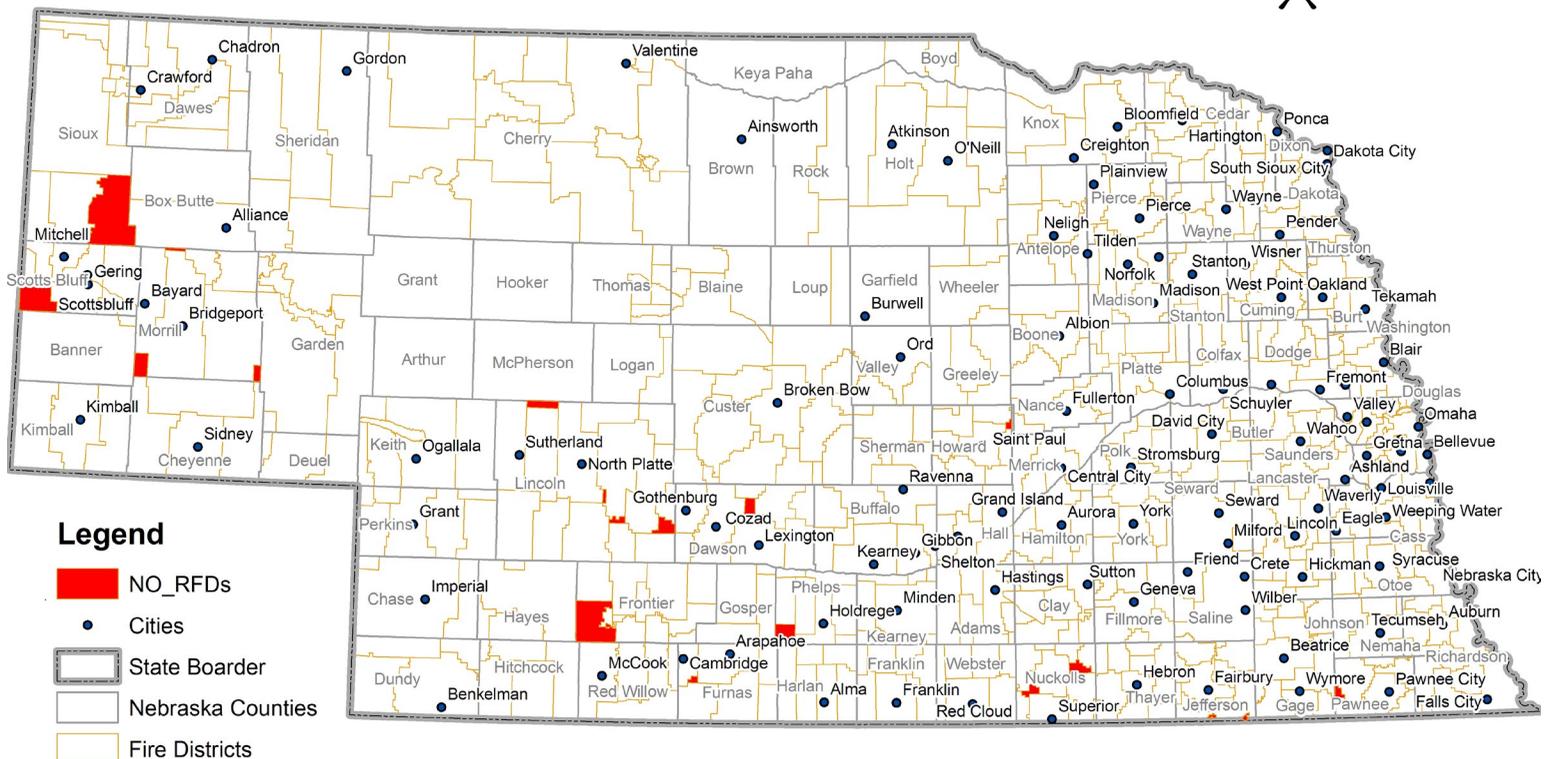
Legal Key:

T - Township

R - Range

N, W, E - north, west, east

All legals are in relation to the 6th principal meridian.



Sandy's Corner

Whew! This has been a traumatic past two weeks for this office – especially ME! Our office sends out reminders to departments about this time each year to departments we have not heard from in quite some time. When preparing the letters, we noticed departments not reporting were extremely high. When your calls started coming in, we learned very quickly why they were high. For some reason, the database of departments who should have been receiving cards from Ag Communications had been corrupted and cards were not being mailed to many of you since last year. We are sorry this happened. Countless hours have been spent correcting the problem, and we think the problem has now been resolved. It would be great if everyone could report on-line, but we also realize this is not possible for many of you. For those departments who have requested yellow reporting cards be sent on a monthly basis, they will be sent. The fire chief should receive the card at the end of each month. Please let us know if they stop coming.

Mutual Aid On-line Reporting: Would each department that has reported a Mutual Aid during the 2008 year, please go on-line and review the “pending reports

for Mutual Aid?” There are currently 121 Mutual Aids that I cannot approve because the department that was provided Mutual Aid has not reported the fire. It is possible the fire was not a “wildland” fire and no acres were burned; therefore, the home department did not report for that reason, but I don’t know that. If each of you could review what is pending and perhaps help me resolve these many calls, I would be very grateful.



Reminders:

- Please let us know if there are changes to the fire chief or the president/secretary-treasurer of your rural fire board. It is also helpful if we have the department/chief’s e-mail address.
 - For those reporting with the monthly cards, please report only wildland fires where acres were burned. Instead of a check mark in the “Acres Burned” square, please list the acres. If it is a check mark, it defaults to .01 acres, and that is not always accurate.
 - The deadline for reporting 2008 fires is January 9th, so please make a notation on your calendar to remind you of this date.
- Thanks to each of you for reporting.

Rural Firefighter Also Available on the Internet

In addition to hard copies mailed to all NFS fire department cooperators, every issue of the Rural Firefighter is also posted to the Internet. Current and past issues can be found on the Nebraska Forest Service web page at www.nfs.unl.edu. Navigate to the Wildland Fire Protection pages of the website and you’ll find links to the newsletters in the lower half of the page.

If you would like to receive email notification when the latest issue of the Rural Firefighter is posted on the web, send your name and email address to Casey McCoy, NFS wildland fire training manager, at cmccoy3@unl.edu.



Calendar of Events

Jan 5-11	CO Wildfire Academy Greeley, CO
Feb 20-22	Les Lukert Winter Conference, NSFSI, Midtown Holiday Inn, Grand Island
Mar/April	2nd Annual Nebraska Wildland Fire Academy Date TBA

Happy Thanksgiving & Merry Christmas!

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln does not discriminate based on gender, age, disability, race, color, religion, marital status, veteran’s status, national or ethnic origin, or sexual orientation.



ONLY YOU CAN PREVENT WILDFIRES.